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First Committee
9th meeting
Thursday, 14 October 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. De Alba ..... (Mexico)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 57 to 72 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Shamsher M. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating you most warmly on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. I am confident that the deliberations of the Committee under your able and skilled stewardship will come to fruition. I also would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his comprehensive statement at the 2nd meeting.

We are meeting here at a time when the concept of multilateralism — the foundation on which the Charter was constructed — is at grave risk. It is regrettable to note that the Disarmament Commission has not been able to agree on an agenda after years of deliberations and that it has again failed to adopt a substantive report on its work. The Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral forum for negotiation on disarmament, also could not come up with a programme of work, thus blocking substantive work on disarmament.

Deliberations in the First Committee over the past week have only reaffirmed those concerns. We cannot overemphasize the need to identify specific, practical and transparent methods to achieve complete disarmament and non-proliferation under effective international control. The failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work is a sad reflection of the lack of political will, particularly on the part of the major players, in addressing disarmament issues.

Nevertheless, Bangladesh welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and calls upon Member States to take concrete and effective measures that will complement ongoing efforts to strengthen multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

We agree with the Secretary-General's statement in his report on the work of the Organization that "The architects of the Charter were guided by a central idea — that durable international peace could be built only on foundations of interdependence" (*A/59/1, para. 296*). Bangladesh is thus a strong advocate of establishing the supremacy of the rule of law and multilateralism in all areas of international relations, including in the areas of non-proliferation and disarmament.

We are disappointed with the meagre progress made in the Conference on Disarmament this year. Strong political will among member States is essential to push the process ahead, enabling the Conference on Disarmament to resume its role of negotiating new arms control and disarmament agreements, with an emphasis on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

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We are also concerned at the slow pace of disarmament, at violations of non-proliferation commitments and at the threat of terrorism. Such developments jeopardize international peace and security and may increase the risk of new instances of the unilateral or pre-emptive use of force.

We are concerned at the lack of progress on the part of the nuclear-weapon States in accomplishing the elimination of their arsenals with a view to nuclear disarmament. We wish to stress the threat to humanity that derives from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. We cannot but underscore the need to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons to save the world from the dangers of nuclear proliferation. We urge the parties concerned to commence negotiations on that issue without delay.

We are also concerned that the development of new types of nuclear weapons is being considered. We wish to reiterate that making provision for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States is in contravention to the negative security assurances that have been provided by the nuclear-weapon States. The development of new types of nuclear weapons is also in contravention of the assurances provided by nuclear-weapon States at the time of the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) that the Treaty would prevent the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons.

Bangladesh views the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We regret that the continued inflexible postures of some of the nuclear-weapon States continue to prevent the proper functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish to emphasize the need to start negotiations on a phased programme aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention, within a specific time frame.

We refer to the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We regret that no progress has been made as yet in the fulfilment of that obligation. Bangladesh reiterates its call for an international conference at the earliest possible date with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction. We believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We note with concern the negative implications of the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and the pursuit of advanced military technologies capable of being deployed in outer space, which have contributed to the further erosion of an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and to the strengthening of international security. Bangladesh calls for the immediate commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Bangladesh welcomes the report prepared by the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All Its Aspects and the convening of another Panel of Governmental Experts to explore the issue further. We are convinced that a multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach to the issue of missiles in all its aspects would contribute to international peace and security.

Bangladesh, a country with an impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record, is committed to pursuing universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have consciously and unconditionally chosen to remain non-nuclear. Our unequivocal commitment to full implementation of the NPT in all its aspects emanates from our constitutional obligations with regard to general and complete disarmament. Bangladesh is the first annex-2 nation in South Asia to have signed the CTBT.

As a party to almost all disarmament-related treaties, including the NPT, the CTBT, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, Bangladesh attaches particular importance to strict adherence to those treaties. We consider that nuclear testing of any kind undermines nuclear non-proliferation, both horizontal and vertical,

and constitutes a major threat to international peace and security. We have also concluded a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, including the related Additional Protocol. All of that is tangible testimony to our unswerving commitment to the goal of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

There is a direct relationship between disarmament and development. Here, I should like to refer to the statement made by the leader of the Bangladesh delegation to the General Assembly this year:

> "We believe that there is a direct relationship between disarmament and development. Bangladesh is party to all major international conventions and treaties on disarmament. (We have renounced all weapons of mass destruction.) Our geographical location makes nuclear weapons a direct and legitimate cause for concern to us in the South Asia region. Bangladesh therefore supports all measures, partial and otherwise, towards arms control and conventional and nuclear disarmament". (*A/59/PV.7, p. 33*)

We urge all countries — particularly the major military Powers — to curb their military expenditures and to devote part of the resources made available by implementing disarmament treaties to the economic and social development of the developing countries. It is our conviction that the Millennium Development Goals can best be achieved within the matrix of disarmament, reduction in military expenditure, the devotion of resources to poverty eradication and sustained confidence-building measures.

Bangladesh supports regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. We believe that confidence-building measures through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can contribute significantly to disarmament. We welcome all existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and call for the establishment of such zones in South Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world. The Kathmandu process must be strengthened in contributing to regional peace and security in Asia and the Pacific. The concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at should be pursued with all seriousness to cover more and more regions. In South Asia, India and Pakistan must relinquish their nuclear weapons and must join the NPT.

It is disconcerting to note the persistence of undue restrictions on exports to developing countries of material, equipment and technology for the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. That is in contravention of the provisions of the NPT. Bangladesh calls for the immediate and non-discriminatory fulfilment by nuclear-weapon States of their obligations under article IV of the NPT. We would like to reaffirm the inviolability of peaceful nuclear activities and to reiterate that any attack or threat of attack against peaceful nuclear facilities, operational or under construction, poses a great danger to human beings and the environment and constitutes a grave violation of international law, the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We are deeply concerned over the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. We urge effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted at the United Nations Conference held from 9 to 20 July 2001 in New York. The Programme outlines a realistic, achievable and comprehensive approach towards addressing the problems associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels.

Bangladesh is greatly concerned at the increasing number of civilians, including women and children, who fall victim to anti-personnel mines in conflict and post-conflict situations. We believe that there is a need for the international community to provide necessary assistance to landmine clearance operations as well as a need for the rehabilitation of victims and for their social and economic reintegration in landmine-affected countries. We urge those States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We welcome with satisfaction the adoption of successive General Assembly resolutions on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. It is important to note that the most

effective way in which to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is through the total elimination of such weapons.

We remain convinced that the establishment of the rule of law and multilateralism are the only options for us in dealing with issues relating to international peace and security, including disarmament. Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations system assume paramount importance in that context.

Next year, we will be celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. It will be a moment for reflection — a moment to explore new ideas that can ensure collective security in all its dimensions for all the nations on Earth. That was both the mission and the objective of the founding fathers of the United Nations, which we are duty-bound to uphold.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The Committee has heard the last speaker in the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items, thus completing the first phase of its work. I take this opportunity, on behalf of all the members of the Bureau, to express our gratitude for all the words of congratulation and support that have been addressed to me and my colleagues during the debate — despite the plea that these be omitted in the interest of efficiency.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.